



HIGH SCHOOL MUSICAL

STORIES FROM EAST HIGH

GAME ON!



Inspired by the hit Disney Channel Original Movies



Disney

HIGH SCHOOL MUSICAL

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Published and printed in Malaysia by Pelican Publishing Sdn. Bhd. under license from The Walt Disney Co. (Southeast Asia) Pte Limited



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Book printed and bound in Malaysia
ISBN 978-967-320-330-7 First Edition May 2009.

CHAPTER ONE

Today is the day!” Taylor McKessie exclaimed when she spotted her best friend, Gabriella Montez, walking into East High. Taylor was standing in front of her locker, bouncing up and down. When Gabriella got close enough, Taylor reached out and grabbed her friend’s hands.

Gabriella couldn’t help but jump up and down along with Taylor. Taylor’s enthusiasm was contagious! But she was confused. “What is

today?” Gabriella asked as she continued to jump along with Taylor.

“The announcement for the chairperson of Wildcat Day!” Taylor cried. “It’s only one of the most honored positions of senior year!”

Gabriella stopped jumping and looked at her friend curiously. “Taylor, slow down. What are you talking about?”

Taylor gave Gabriella a serious look. “Principal Matsui is going to announce the chairperson for Wildcat Day today.” She took a breath and continued. “Every year the seniors run the event for the kids in the community and raise money for school activities. One senior gets to be the chairperson for the whole thing! And the seniors get to participate in the events, too. It’s so much fun.”

“Wildcat Day is a *huge* deal to the school,” Troy Bolton said as he walked over to the girls. He casually slung his arm around Gabriella. “Gabriella, you’ve never seen the event, but you will love it,” he said, knowing that she had

started at East High after Christmas vacation last year. He smiled at her. “Wildcat Day is the first Saturday in March every year. It’s run by us and the WPA, the Wildcat Parents Association.”

“It’s a blast!” Chad Danforth chimed in, bouncing his basketball over to stand next to Taylor. “And finally we’re the seniors who run it!” He reached over and gave Troy a high five. “This year, the basketball team’s building a new dunking booth!” Chad exclaimed. “We’re going to raise more money than ever before.”

“New equipment for the basketball team!” Troy cheered.

“Or new computer software for the Scholastic Decathlon team,” Taylor added.

Gabriella laughed. “I get it. We raise money, and the Wildcats get things that we all need. Sign me up!”

“Great!” Taylor exclaimed. “It’s a lot of fun, and it’s all for a good cause.”

“Plus, you’ll love the events. All the younger kids in the neighborhood participate,” Troy said.

“Oh, I really hope that I get picked as chairperson,” Taylor said wistfully.

“You’ve got my vote,” Chad told Taylor, giving her a wide grin.

Taylor blushed. She quickly turned to close her locker and then followed her friends down the hall to homeroom. “Well, we’ll find out soon!” she exclaimed excitedly.

Gabriella put her hand on Taylor’s arm. “I hope Principal Matsui picks you, Taylor.” She gave her friend’s arm a squeeze. “You’d be great at organizing and getting everyone involved.”

“Involved in what?” Kelsi Nielsen asked, overhearing her friends’ conversation as they walked into the room. She was already sitting down in Ms. Darbus’s classroom waiting for homeroom to begin.

“Taylor is all pumped up about the announcement of the Wildcat Day chairperson,” Troy told Kelsi.

“I hope this year we can raise a lot of money,” Kelsi said. “I would love to get some new instru-

ments for the music department.”

Just then, the bell rang, and everyone took their seats. Ms. Darbus waltzed into the room wearing a long, flowing green dress. “Good morning, students!” she sang out. “It’s a fine Monday, isn’t it?”

“Yes, Ms. Darbus,” Sharpay Evans, the co-president of the Drama Club, replied. She flipped her long blond hair to the side and flashed her teacher a big smile. Ms. Darbus was the head of the Drama Club, and Sharpay worshipped the ground she walked on.

“What is Ms. Darbus so happy about?” Chad whispered to Troy, nodding at their teacher. “The last time she was this excited, she gave us a pop quiz in English!”

Troy groaned. He hoped that wasn’t true. He settled into his seat and waited for the morning announcements to begin.

Ms. Darbus quickly took attendance and sat down at her desk as the audio speaker at the front of the room crackled to life.

“Good morning, Wildcats!” Principal Matsui exclaimed through the speaker. “It’s a pleasure to read the morning announcements today. As many of you know, Wildcat Day is a few short weeks away. And today I am proud to announce the chairpersons for the event.”

“Chairpersons?” Taylor whispered to Gabriella. There had always been just one chairperson for the event. And this year it was supposed to be *just* her! Taylor put her chin in her hand and leaned in closer to listen.

“There were many fine candidates this year,” Principal Matsui went on. “It made the decision very difficult. But I am proud to say that Ms. Darbus has agreed to be the teacher adviser for the event, along with Coach Bolton, who is the liaison to the Parents Association.”

“Way to go, Ms. Darbus!” Chad cheered.

Ms. Darbus smiled. She stood up, curtsied, and then sat back down in her seat.

“Maybe your dad can score us some new jerseys, too,” Chad whispered to Troy.

Troy nodded. But he knew that his dad took his role as a member of the Wildcat Parents Association seriously. There'd be no special treatment for the basketball team. They'd have to work hard like everyone else to get any benefits from the day.

Gabriella glanced over at Taylor. She could see how nervous her friend was as Principal Matsui continued on about the role of the WPA. She knew that everyone was anxious to hear who the chairpersons of the event would be.

“For all of her fine work on the Heart to Heart fund-raiser, her all-around good spirit for the Wildcats, and her roles in all of our school musicals, please congratulate Ms. Sharpay Evans!” Principal Matsui announced.

Sharpay jumped up and blew kisses to the class. Then she took a bow. “I’m so honored. Thank you all!”

Taylor looked over at Gabriella. She couldn’t believe her ears! How could this be? Sharpay? She didn’t have experience organizing anything,

except maybe her closet, Taylor thought to herself. But before Taylor could respond, there was more crackling from the speakers.

Principal Matsui continued. “Because it was so difficult to select just one person this year, we have decided to have two chairpersons. The co-chair will be Taylor McKessie. She has done so much for our Scholastic Decathlon team and our Chemistry Club. Taylor is a shining example of Wildcat spirit.”

Gabriella jumped up and started applauding. Chad and Troy joined in, too. Taylor beamed as she stood up. Maybe having two chairpersons *wasn’t* such a bad thing she thought, as she took in all the praise. After all, Sharpay could always help her decorate the booths. Taylor gave Gabriella a high five and then quickly took her seat. Taylor was thrilled that she had also been selected. She couldn’t wait to start planning. There were supplies to be ordered, charts to be made . . .

“This is all *very* exciting!” Ms. Darbus

exclaimed when the announcements were over.

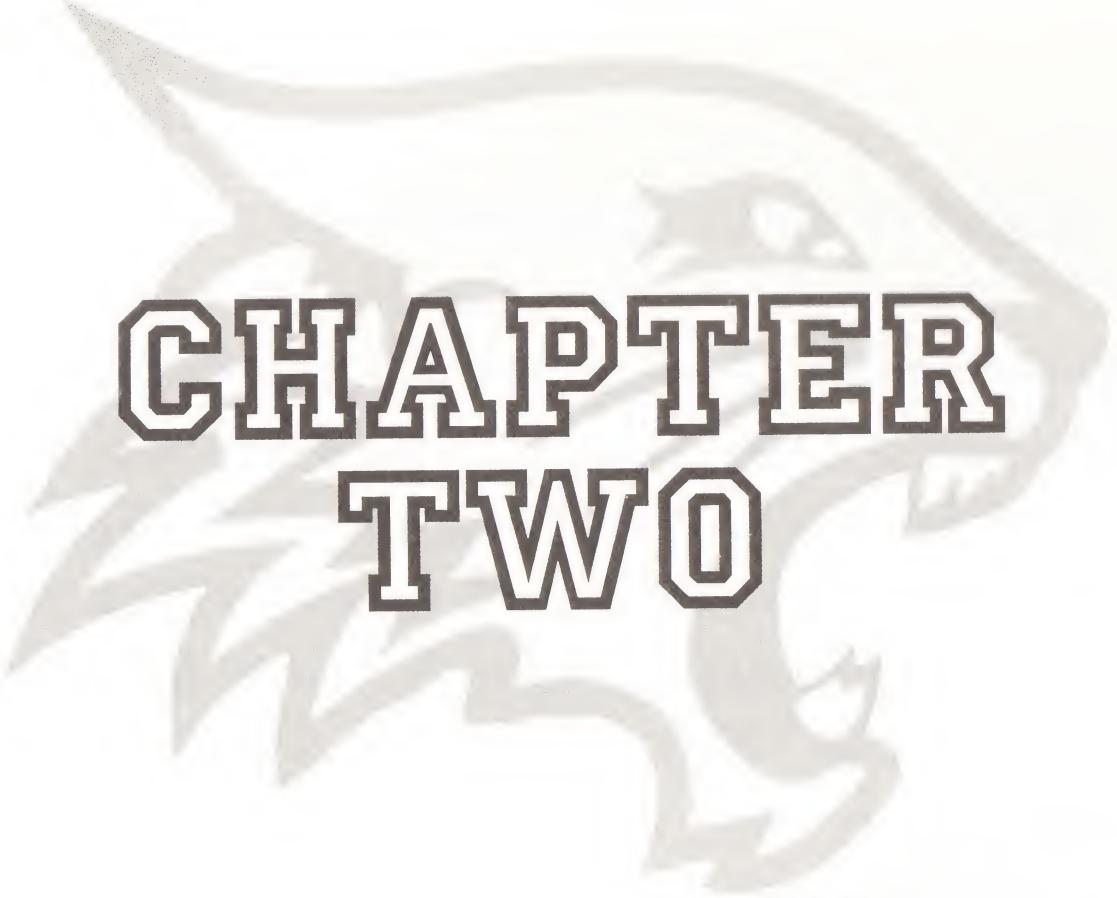
"It will be *the* best Wildcat Day," Sharpay said. She looked over at Taylor. "No doubt that there will be some *huge* changes."

Taylor started to wonder what kind of changes Sharpay had in mind. There would be enough to do without changing things from previous years. There were all the after-school clubs and sports teams to coordinate, booths to construct, marketing plans to create, and more. Taylor wanted everyone in the community to come to the event, and getting the word out was going to be hard work. She glanced over at Sharpay, who was admiring herself in her pink compact mirror.

Working with Sharpay is going to be interesting, that's for sure, Taylor mused as she watched her co-chair from across the room. They had totally different styles of working. Would they be able to pull off a successful Wildcats Day?

Ms. Darbus surveyed Sharpay and Taylor.

They certainly would bring different things to the co-chairperson position, she thought. She only hoped that the two of them would be able to work together without any serious drama!



CHAPTER TWO

Taylor rushed into Ms. Darbus's classroom before homeroom, eager to go over all the details of Wildcat Day at their planning meeting. She had a binder full of notes and felt very prepared. Since the co-chairperson announcement two weeks ago, Taylor had taken her responsibilities very seriously. She had been busy recruiting students to pitch in and try to make this year's event the most profitable—and the most fun.

She had created a spreadsheet on her computer that held all the booth information and she had even mapped out where everything should be set up on the soccer field.

Inside Ms. Darbus's classroom, Taylor found Sharpay sitting on top of a desk, filing her nails. Sharpay looked up when Taylor walked in and nodded. "Hello, Taylor," she said in a bored tone.

"Hello, Sharpay," Taylor replied crisply. She was starting to feel like she, alone, was doing all the work. She was beginning to get annoyed but she wasn't about to let Wildcat Day suffer because Sharpay wasn't doing her share. Taylor was determined to make this event the best in East High history.

"Hello, ladies," Ms. Darbus said as she walked into the classroom. She quickly sat down and put her hands on top of the desk. "Let's get started."

After tucking her hot pink emery board back in her purse, Sharpay slid into a chair next to Ms.

Darbus. "This is so exciting," she said. "Wildcat Day is going to be fabulous!"

"Where are your notes?" Taylor asked, giving Sharpay an inquisitive look. She was amazed that Sharpay didn't have a huge notebook in front of her. How could she not come prepared to this meeting? Wildcat Day was this weekend!

"All the notes are in my head," Sharpay said haughtily. She turned to Ms. Darbus. "We'll be able to get new costumes for the prop room and *finally* some decent lighting in the dressing rooms," she said sweetly.

"And what have you done except paint your nails white and red?" Taylor asked as she eyed Sharpay's Wildcat-colored manicure. "This day is *not* all about you and raising money for the drama department!"

Ms. Darbus held up her hands. "All right, girls," she said calmly. "Let's just see what we have signed up already."

Taylor opened her binder and presented a list

of all the booths that she had assigned students to work at. Then she powered up her laptop and displayed her charts. “Most of the clubs and sports teams are doing the booth that they sponsored last year,” she said. “And this year I got the chess team and the yearbook staff to run a booth, too.”

Ms. Darbus nodded. “Well done,” she said. She took out the official form that Principal Matsui had given her and jotted down all the information. “This is really terrific, Taylor. Thank you.”

“This year the attendance will be huge,” Sharpay said, stretching as she got up from her chair. “Everyone is going to want to come see me.” She smiled broadly at Ms. Darbus and Taylor.

Glancing up from her binder, Taylor blew her hair off her forehead. “You *can’t* be serious. You think that everyone is going to come to Wildcat Day just because you’re a co-chair?”

“No, silly,” Sharpay told her. “I’ll be

performing as well,” she announced. She did a few quick dance steps and ended with a bow. “I’m working on a new number.”

“This isn’t the Sharpay Show!” Taylor exclaimed. “There’s never been a show on Wildcat Day. It’s a field-day event!”

Taylor looked to Ms. Darbus for help. But her teacher was tapping her pencil nervously on the desk. “Ladies, we need to work together. We have another meeting with Coach Bolton tomorrow, which is the last official one. The event is this weekend! We need to focus.”

“I am focused,” Sharpay said, nodding.

“Yeah, on yourself,” Taylor mumbled.

“When we meet with Coach Bolton, all the plans need to be finalized,” Ms Darbus told them.

“Don’t worry,” Sharpay assured her teacher. She reached out and patted Ms. Darbus on the arm. “Everything is going to be perfect.”

Taylor raised her eyebrows. She was

beginning to worry that Wildcat Day might be a perfect *disaster*!

“How cool is this phone?” Chad asked Troy as they walked down the hall to English class. They were both staring at the new phones in their hands, playing around with the features. “I’m so glad that you talked me into getting this model,” Chad told his friend. “It’s awesome!”

“Yeah,” Troy replied. “It’s really small, but the keys are easy to press. It’s a pretty cool phone, but I still don’t really know how to use it.”

“There’s a tutorial right here,” Chad said. He stopped and put his basketball under his arm. “See, look, if you press these buttons, there’s a program that shows you all the shortcuts.”

Troy stood looking over Chad’s shoulder, watching the screen on Chad’s phone. Then he started his own tutorial program. “Wow, that is very cool,” he replied, checking out all of the keystroke shortcuts.

“Hey, guys,” Gabriella called out, walking up

to them. “Taylor wanted me to ask you both if the basketball team has started their booth.” She looked at the boy’s blank faces and realized the answer to her question. “Hmm, that’s what I figured.” She gave them a concerned look. “Are you almost done?” she asked, trying to be optimistic.

Shaking his head, Troy shrugged. “We haven’t even started,” he admitted. “The team is meeting in the wood shop today. Last year it only took us one day to build it. We’ll get it done. Don’t worry.”

“Oh, I’m not worried,” Gabriella said, walking with them down the hall. “I know you will come through. But Taylor is really nervous. Only three more days to Wildcat Day!”

The bell rang and the three of them walked into Ms. Darbus’s classroom, along with a few other students. Their teacher was waiting at the front of the room with a book in her hand.

“Come in quickly, class,” Ms. Darbus ordered. “Please settle down. We have a lot of things to go over today.”

As everyone sat down in their seats, Troy and Gabriella looked at each other and grinned. They loved being in the same English class.

“Today, we are discussing *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald,” Ms. Darbus said grandly. With a piece of chalk in her hand, she paused dramatically at the blackboard and smiled at the class. “This is one of my favorite novels and it is a perfect example of—”

Suddenly, Ms. Darbus was interrupted by a loud buzzing sound. Quickly, she whirled around, a cold, stern look on her face.

“Did I just hear a *cell phone* in my classroom?” she asked loudly.

Everyone in the class reached into their bags and pockets with fearful expressions on their faces. The wrath of Ms. Darbus was fierce—especially when a cell phone was involved. Troy and Chad quickly realized that it was their phones making the sounds. They had totally forgotten to turn them off, and the tutorial programs were still running!

Chad shook his head as he tried to silence his phone. He let out a sigh. On her desk, Ms. Darbus kept a bucket reserved for confiscated cell phones. He knew his phone was a goner.

Buzzzzzzzzz. Troy groaned. As he reached into his backpack, he sensed Ms. Darbus standing right next to him. Her radar for ringing phones was very acute.

“Mr. Bolton,” Ms. Darbus began briskly, “I believe that you are in violation of having a cell phone in class.”

Instantly, Ms. Darbus turned around and faced Chad. “And you, too, Mr. Danforth,” she hissed. Without another word, she stretched out her arm, and the two boys placed their phones in the bucket she was holding.

“I would like to have a five-hundred-word essay on the importance of cell phone etiquette on my desk by the end of the day,” Ms. Darbus said crisply. “Then, and only then, will I return your phones to you, under the condition that I

never hear that buzzing in my classroom again!"

Both Troy and Chad nodded. Even though they had both left their phones on by accident, they knew better than to argue with Ms. Darbus.

Gabriella looked over at Troy and Chad. "Sorry," she whispered. She felt really bad that they would have to write an essay during their only free period.

"I guess even the newest phone isn't smart enough to silence itself," Zeke Baylor, one of the members of the Wildcats basketball team, who was also a star chef, commented.

"Yeah," Jason Cross added. "I'm just glad it wasn't my phone that rang. The last thing I need is even more homework than I have already!"

Chad groaned and then turned back around in his seat. As if the pressure to build a basketball dunking booth wasn't enough, now he had to write an essay. And Wildcat Day was just around the corner!

CHAPTER THREE

After school that day, Zeke spotted Troy and Chad walking down the hall. “Hey, guys! The wood shop is the other way!” he called as he chased after them.

Troy and Chad stopped and waited for Zeke to catch up. “We have to hand in our essays on cell phone etiquette to Ms. Darbus,” Troy explained.

“And get our phones back!” Chad added. “First day with our new phones and they get

confiscated by the cell phone police!"

"Writing this took up my whole free period!" Troy exclaimed. "You bet I'll be remembering to turn the phone off from now on."

Zeke walked down the hallway with his teammates. "Ms. Darbus means business," he agreed. "My phone has ended up in her pail plenty of times."

Bouncing his basketball a couple of times, Chad nodded. "Don't worry. After we get our phones, we're heading to wood shop." He lifted the basketball up and spun it expertly on his fingertips. "I've got some big plans for our new dunking booth." Chad glanced over at his friends and noticed Zeke's worried expression. "We'll get the booth done before Saturday, no problem."

"Teamwork, remember?" Troy said. "The new slam-dunk booth is going to be great."

Zeke reached over and grabbed Chad's basketball. He had something else on his mind, and he was happy to have Troy and Chad's attention.

“Maybe we should try something new this year,” Zeke suggested. He passed the ball back to Chad as the three continued down the hall. “I was thinking that maybe we could create a pie-throwing booth. Those are always fun. And I make a killer lemon-meringue pie.” He glanced at his friends. “It could be really cool.”

“Did I hear someone say lemon *meringue*?” Sharpay cooed. She was standing outside Ms. Darbus’s door and had overheard the last part of their conversation. She rushed over to them.

“Well, *yum!* Did you bake a pie, Zeke?” She flashed him a huge smile and batted her eyelashes. She was hoping for a sweet snack from her favorite baker.

Zeke blushed. “Well, um, not today,” he stammered nervously. It was no secret that Zeke had a crush on Sharpay.

“I was just thinking that a pie throw might be fun for the kids at Wildcat Day,” Zeke said modestly. He looked at Sharpay hopefully. “What do you think?”

Sharpay tossed her hair over her shoulder. “As the co-chairperson of the event,” she declared loudly, “I think that’s a *delicious* idea!”

“But the basketball team always does the slam dunk booth, Zeke,” Chad reminded his friend, giving him a nudge.

“How about we do the pie-throwing at the Drama Club booth?” Sharpay asked, smiling at Zeke. She wanted to do something different this year—something special. “It would be awesome! And I’m sure Ryan would love it. He loves lemon-meringue pie!”

Chad gave Sharpay a curious look. “I bet Ryan doesn’t love having pie thrown at him,” he quipped.

Troy laughed. “Listen, Sharpay,” he said. “You can have the pie-throwing for your booth. But Zeke has got to help us out with the dunking booth today. The whole team is waiting for us so we can go over the plans and start building it.”

“I can do both!” Zeke exclaimed enthusiastically. There was no way that he was going to pass

up an opportunity to make Sharpay happy. After all, how hard could it be to bake a few dozen pies?

“Ooooh, that’s just fabulous!” Sharpay cheered. She clapped her hands excitedly. “Wait until I tell Ryan and Ms. Darbus. Thanks, Zeke!” She spun on one heel and rushed inside Ms. Darbus’s classroom.

Troy glanced over at Zeke. “Great idea for the Drama Club,” he said. “We’ll see you at the wood shop.”

“You bet!” Zeke exclaimed as he walked off with a wide smile plastered across his face.

Inside Ms. Darbus’s classroom, Sharpay was already busy explaining how the pie-throwing booth would work as Troy and Chad walked in. “And then Ryan will sit on the bench and people will throw pies at him!” she exclaimed. She clapped her hands together again with sheer delight. “Everyone’s going to love it!”

“Have you talked to Ryan about this idea yet?” Ms. Darbus asked cautiously. She wasn’t sure

Ryan, or anyone, for that matter, would be happy about getting hit in the face with pies all day!

“Don’t worry about Ryan,” Sharpay said, waving her hand dismissively. “He’ll do it.”

Troy and Chad exchanged a dubious look and shrugged. Then they walked over to Ms. Darbus to hand in their essays.

“Thank you, boys,” she said as she collected their papers. She quickly scanned the pages and eyed the boys carefully. “Have you learned an important lesson?”

“Yes,” Troy and Chad answered in unison. They would definitely be more careful about switching their phones off before her class in the future!

Sharpay continued telling their teacher about all of her new plans. “And Ms. Darbus, we could have a stage for Ryan to sit on, with curtains, to really enhance the whole *theatrical* experience,” she said dramatically.

Troy anxiously looked up at the clock above the door. He realized that the basketball team

was probably sitting around waiting in the wood shop for him and Chad. He had to move this along—and get his phone back!

“Um, Ms. Darbus,” Troy said, clearing his throat a couple of times. “Do you think that since Chad and I learned our lesson, we could get our phones back?”

“Oh, of course, boys,” she said distractedly. She walked over to her desk, where the cell phone pail was sitting.

Obviously, he and Chad weren’t the only ones who had gotten caught with a ringing cell phone that day. There were quite a few phones in the bucket.

“And you know what?” Sharpay went on. “We could have people take turns in the booth. You know, to give Ryan a break every once in a while. What about you, Troy? You’ve got amazing school spirit. You’d be great!”

Yikes! Troy thought. Sharpay was looking right at him with that gleam in her eye. He had seen that look before—and he wasn’t about to

get sucked into another Sharpay idea! It was enough that he'd probably be soaking wet from the dunking booth. He didn't want to get hit in the face with pies on top of it!

"Sorry, Sharpay," Troy told her. "I have a lot to do for Wildcat Day already. I wouldn't want to make a promise I couldn't keep."

Troy turned to Ms. Darbus. "These two phones are ours," he said, trying to change the subject. He tossed a phone to Chad and headed for the door. "Thanks, Ms. Darbus," Troy called. "I apologize again for our phones ringing in your class." He glanced over at Sharpay. "We've really got to run," he said. "The team is waiting for us. Sorry again."

"We'll be more careful with our phones, Ms. Darbus," Chad added as he rushed out the door behind Troy.

Sharpay put her hands on her waist. "Fine," she snipped. "Don't be a part of the best booth. I'm sure that I'll find a lot of other volunteers who would *love* to participate." She looked back

at Ms. Darbus. “Minor complication. Don’t worry.”

Ms. Darbus raised her eyebrows and then returned to reviewing the sign-up sheets. This was going to be a very interesting Wildcat Day, that was for sure.

In the wood shop, the varsity basketball team was trying to figure out the best way to construct the new dunking booth. Mr. Lloyd, the wood-shop teacher, was helping the team draw up plans.

“Can we pull this off?” Jason asked. The plans looked pretty complicated to him.

“Sure we can!” Zeke exclaimed, giving him a playful shove. “Piece of cake!”

“With no pun intended, right, Zeke?” Troy asked jokingly.

Mr. Lloyd chuckled. “Don’t worry,” he said to the boys. “I’ll be here to help. The booth is very straightforward. First, though, we need to have all the correct measurements.”

Troy grabbed a ruler and handed it to Mr. Lloyd.

“Thanks, Troy,” the teacher said, as he put the ruler down on the graph paper. “Just like you have a game plan for a big game, we need to map out the booth so we know what we’re doing.”

The team was silent as Mr. Lloyd jotted down measurements and drew a diagram of the booth.

“Can we pad the seat with some foam?” Chad asked, pointing to the bench where the player would sit while waiting to be dunked.

“Sure,” Mr. Lloyd said. “But you may not be sitting up there long if you get a good thrower!”

Everyone laughed. Just then, Coach Bolton, Troy’s dad and the coach of the Wildcats basketball team, walked into the room.

“You know,” he said, eyeing his team, “it’s usually only the seniors who sit in the booth. So no hassles with sign-up for taking a shift, okay?”

The team nodded. There wasn’t anyone who didn’t want to help out.

Mr. Lloyd held up the final plans. “Cool!” Zeke exclaimed.

“If we can all meet back here tomorrow afternoon, we’ll be able to pull this together,” Mr. Lloyd said.

“Good work!” Coach Bolton cheered. “I can’t wait to see this.”

Troy looked down at his watch. “I’ve got to go,” he said to Chad. “Gabriella’s mom is taking us both to a concert tonight. It’s some Italian composer Gabriella’s mom loves. We’re going out to dinner first, so I have to run.” He grabbed his backpack and headed for the door.

“Hey, Troy!” Chad called after his friend. “Don’t forget to turn your phone off in the theater!”

Troy turned around and waved. “Yes, it’s not good manners to chat on your phone during a performance or class,” he said, reciting a line that he’d written for his essay. “Let’s all meet back here tomorrow, and we’ll get this job done!” he shouted to the team. He glanced around the room at all his

teammates. “What’s our name?”

“Wildcats!” the team cheered.

After Troy left, Jason took a look around at all the wooden boards and piles of nails. “You think we’ll finish this by tomorrow?” he asked.

“Everyone is counting on us,” Zeke said worriedly. “I really hope we can do it.”

“Of course we’ll do it!” Chad exclaimed. “Who won the championship last year? And what team is the best?”

“Wildcats!” the team answered.

As everyone headed out of the wood shop, Chad suddenly felt his phone vibrate in his pocket. He reached in and saw that there was a text message from Coach Bolton. The message on the screen made no sense to him.

Does Chad know? Make sure no one says a word!

Chad took a closer look at the phone in his hand. He went back to the main screen and realized that he was holding Troy’s phone, not his own! In Ms. Darbus’s classroom, they must have taken the wrong phones! But Troy was already

gone. Chad would have to wait until tomorrow to switch phones, but he couldn't help looking at the text message again. What did it mean? Slipping the phone back in his pocket, Chad began to wonder. What was Troy up to?

CHAPTER FOUR

The next morning, Ryan was watching Sharpay pace back and forth in front of her locker. He hadn't seen her this upset since her favorite pink shirt shrunk in the dryer.

"Sharpay, get a grip!" Ryan exclaimed, grabbing her shoulders. In the four minutes between classes, Sharpay was having a full-on panic attack.

"But I'm the co-chairperson, Ryan," she

whined. “This year *has* to be the best. We have to come up with something different! Wildcat Day is always so predictable.”

Ryan shrugged and reached into his locker for his math book. “The younger kids love to run around and do all the activities every year. So do we.”

“Not *everyone* does,” Sharpay said, fanning herself with a Wildcat Day flyer. “I think the day should be a little more sophisticated. The drama department is every bit as important as all the East High sports teams are. And everyone loves our shows. We still have a couple of days to make some last-minute changes.”

Ryan thought for a moment. “You have a valid point,” he said. “Go to the meeting and tell Coach Bolton your ideas,” Ryan suggested. “I’m sure Ms. Darbus will love adding more *drama*.”

“You know, Ryan,” Sharpay said slowly, “you’re right.”

Ryan’s mouth dropped open. Sharpay never admitted that he was right!

“Ms. Darbus would *definitely* appreciate more drama,” she said earnestly as she took in his surprised expression. “And the same way we advertise all of our theater productions, we need to cover the entire neighborhood with these flyers.” She handed Ryan a huge stack of papers.

“You really *are* taking this seriously,” Ryan commented.

Sharpay looked at Ryan pointedly. “I am going to change Wildcat Day for the better.” she declared. “Just watch me!”

“And watch out everyone else,” Ryan whispered to himself as Sharpay hurried off to Ms. Darbus’s classroom for the final planning meeting.

In Ms. Darbus’s classroom, Sharpay found Taylor, Coach Bolton, and Ms. Darbus already seated at the small table in the back of the room. As the Parents Association liaison, Coach Bolton was there to make sure that all the plans were in place for Wildcat Day.

“Helloooooo,” Sharpay sang out. She rushed in

and grabbed a seat next to Ms. Darbus. “I can’t believe that Saturday is almost here. I can’t wait!”

Taylor shook her head. “I can’t believe it’s Thursday already. We only have one more day to prepare, and there is so much to do!” There were a ton of details to consider, and they still had to figure out exactly where all the booths would be set up on the field. Taylor hoped that Sharpay had come ready to work today. They only had half of the period to get all the details hammered out.

Leaning forward, Sharpay began to tell everyone her idea. “So I was thinking. Why not change it up a little this year?” Her eyes gleamed as she stood up. “Let’s not just have a boring old field day. Let’s make it a *drama*-themed event!”

“A *what*!?” Taylor asked loudly. With less than forty-eight hours to go, Sharpay was campaigning to make changes? “You can’t do that!” Taylor exclaimed. “We have commitments from all the clubs and teams. Everyone is expecting a big field-day event with—”

Suddenly, Coach Bolton blew his whistle and put his hand up in the air. “Whoa!” he exclaimed. He made a time-out symbol with his hands, as if he were refereeing a basketball game. “Hold on there.” Taylor and Sharpay immediately fell silent.

“Okay, then,” Coach Bolton said, enjoying the moment of quiet. “Here’s the game plan. We only have one more day before the event. Let’s figure out where the booths will be set up, and if there is time, we can think about offering more booths with drama themes.” He glanced over at Taylor. “Are we in agreement?” He watched as Taylor slowly nodded.

“But I still think we should have a make-your-own-tiara table, a theatrical puppet show, and maybe even a karaoke stage!” Sharpay pleaded.

Coach Bolton looked at Ms. Darbus for help. Taylor understood but he didn’t seem to be getting through to Sharpay.

“People do love a good show,” Ms. Darbus said slowly.

“And Ryan and I would perform, of course,” Sharpay said quickly.

“Of course you guys will,” Taylor said, frustrated. “What would the day be without a dramatic performance by Sharpay and Ryan?” she added.

“Let’s just map out the booths that we have signed up, shall we?” Coach Bolton interrupted, trying to get the girls to focus. He unfolded a large piece of paper that showed the layout of the field.

But Sharpay wasn’t about to give up. She moved her chair closer to Ms. Darbus. “Ms. Darbus,” she coaxed, “we should do this! Get the community excited by theater! This could be a great opportunity for the school, for our Drama Club, for us!”

This time Taylor didn’t even respond. She gave her notes to Coach Bolton and tried to ignore Sharpay. There was no way that they could handle more booths!

“Hi, everyone!” a joyful voice suddenly cried out.

The group all looked up to see Gabriella standing in the doorway.

“I’m sorry to interrupt,” she said, still standing at the door. “I have that extra-credit report for you, Ms. Darbus.”

Ms. Darbus smiled. “Thank you, Gabriella,” she said. “Why don’t you just put it on my desk?” She motioned for Gabriella to enter the room.

Feeling a bit awkward about interrupting their meeting, Gabriella quickly walked over to the desk.

“If we set up a stage,” Sharpay went on to explain, “people would be happy to watch a show.”

Gabriella couldn’t help but notice how annoyed Taylor looked. She knew that Sharpay wasn’t the best co-chairperson for Taylor. They each had very different ideas about Wildcat Day and different styles of getting tasks done. But as Gabriella observed the meeting, she had to wonder if maybe that wasn’t such a bad thing? Sharpay and Taylor had the potential to make

this event more successful than ever before.

Gabriella walked over to the table where everyone was sitting. "That sounds like fun," she said.

"But we are running out of time!" Taylor cried.

"Hmm. Why don't you ask more people to join the committee?" Gabriella asked. "If you get more people involved, the turnout might be even greater. And that way, you could have more of the Drama Club stuff and still have the field-day events, too. There is still time to make it happen."

Coach Bolton grinned in Gabriella's direction. He was glad someone was thinking like a team player! "That's a really good idea," he said.

Sharpay thought for a moment. A bigger cast meant a bigger production. And she was all in favor of that! "Let's do it!" she cheered enthusiastically.

"So, do you want to be on the committee?" Taylor asked Gabriella. She could really use her

friend's help! She clasped her hands together and looked at Gabriella anxiously.

"Sure, I'd love to!" Gabriella exclaimed with a big grin. How could she have said no? She was glad to help out and happy to see Taylor smiling again. "Sign me up!"

"Thank you," Taylor told her. She gave Gabriella a grateful look. Now that the plans were coming together, and Gabriella had agreed to help, Taylor felt a little bit better. But she couldn't help but worry about Sharpay's big plans—and all the work still to be done.

CHAPTER FIVE

When the final bell rang later that day, Chad was ready to start work on the dunking booth. As a kid, Wildcat Day had always been his favorite day. He loved all the activities and prizes. Now that he was co-captain of the varsity basketball team, he wanted to make sure that the annual dunking machine booth was the best one.

Chad knew the team would pull through and build an awesome booth. Most of the others

wouldn't be as elaborate as theirs, but the basketball team had a reputation to uphold.

Then Chad remembered he had to find Troy to get his phone back. And to ask him about the strange text message from yesterday.

“Mr. Danforth!” a voice suddenly bellowed from down the hallway.

Hearing his name, Chad froze. He quickly turned around and saw Principal Matsui standing behind him. He panicked for a minute, but then relaxed when he realized that the final bell had rung and that he didn't need to have a hall pass. He gave a sigh of relief. “Hi, Principal Matsui,” he said.

“Could you help me in the office?” the principal asked. “We just got a huge shipment of materials for Wildcat Day and I need some help moving the boxes out of the front office and into the supply closet. It won't take long.”

“Sure,” Chad answered. He followed Principal Matsui to the front office. He saw that the principal had already recruited Ryan, Kelsi,

and Martha Cox. With all of them helping, they'd clear out the office in no time.

"How's the new dunking booth coming along?" Kelsi asked Chad, as she held the supply-room door open for him. "I heard the whole team is meeting in the wood shop today to finish building it."

Chad placed the box he was carrying down on the closet floor. "Yeah, the booth should be pretty cool."

"Especially when you get dunked in the water!" Ryan exclaimed as he stacked a box on top of Chad's.

Martha followed Ryan into the closet, holding a smaller box. "What's better—getting drenched or having a pie thrown at your face?" she asked, grinning. She put her box on the floor and looked at Ryan. "Is it true that you're sitting at the pie-throw booth? The Scholastic Decathlon team is sponsoring the dance triangle. No mess, just fun."

"What's a dance triangle?" Kelsi asked as they

all walked back to the front office to get another load of boxes.

“We’re going to mark off a triangle on the dance floor and play hip-hop music,” Martha explained. “I made a special playlist for the occasion. It’ll be great.”

Before they reached the office, Chad felt the cell phone in his pocket vibrate. He took the phone out to look at the screen. There was a message from Zeke.

Chad is going to be so surprised!

Huh? Chad thought. What was going on here? Once again, he wondered why his friends were texting Troy about him. He put the phone back in his pocket and continued walking. He had to find Troy right away.

After one more trip to the supply closet, Principal Matsui’s helpers returned to the office.

“Thank you,” Principal Matsui said gratefully. “This is going to be a great Wildcats Day. I appreciate the help very much.”

“No problem,” Chad replied, as he glanced up

at the large clock in the office. He grabbed his backpack and rushed off to the wood shop. “See you guys later,” he called over his shoulder to Ryan, Kelsi, and Martha.

The wood shop was in total chaos when Chad walked in. The team was arguing about which pieces of wood to use, and the place was a mess! And Troy was nowhere to be found.

“You have to use the wide pieces,” Jason said.

“But first you need to attach the smaller ones,” Zeke insisted. He held up a piece of wood for emphasis.

Chad headed over to his friends. “What’s going on?” he asked. “Where are Coach and Troy?”

“They’re coming,” Jason explained. “They went with Mr. Lloyd to get some extra wood. But they’d better make it back here fast. This team is going nowhere right now.”

“Too many cooks in the kitchen,” Zeke said, shrugging his shoulders.

This is not teamwork, Chad thought. He

imagined the final seconds of a game where the team had to get the ball to a player to make the score. I have to take control of the situation, he decided. The level of noise was increasing, and nothing was getting accomplished. He knew he needed to make a play.

He put his two fingers to his lips and blew. The sharp whistle stopped the bickering. Everyone in the room froze and stared at Chad. “Wildcats!” he shouted. “Time out!”

Once he had everyone’s attention, Chad addressed the group. “Look, everyone wants to make this booth great, but it’s not going to get done unless we work together.” He studied his teammates, waiting for them all to nod in agreement. As soon as they did, Chad continued. “Yesterday we were all working together. We need more of that teamwork now!”

“He’s right,” Jason added from the sidelines. “Everyone has got to chill.”

Zeke stepped forward. “Mr. Lloyd asked us to

get started,” he said, “and we don’t have a lot of time. Wildcat Day is Saturday!”

The rest of the team settled down and focused their attention on Chad.

“Look, Mr. Lloyd will be here any minute,” Chad said. “In the meantime, let’s stack up the wood in piles so we know what we have here.”

The team started to quietly and calmly organize the woodpile. Zeke and Jason caught Chad’s eye and gave him a thumbs-up. Chad grinned. Being co-captain of the Wildcats meant pitching in whenever he could. Usually Troy or Coach Bolton was the playmaker, but Chad could step into the role, too. And that was a good feeling.

A little while later, when Mr. Lloyd walked in, he was impressed with how calm and organized everyone was as they worked.

“Sorry I got held up,” Mr. Lloyd told the team. He surveyed the room. “Good job of setting up here,” he said. “We’ll be able to get this done in no time.”

“We’re all ready to listen to your instructions,” Chad told the teacher. He was really proud of the team.

Picking up a hammer, Mr. Lloyd grinned. “Great, let’s get started. Coach Bolton and Troy will be along shortly with the extra wood.”

Chad, who was the first to volunteer, got busy building the base of the booth. With Zeke, Jason, and the rest of the Wildcats at his side, he was sure that the foundation of the booth would be solid.

“This is looking good!” Coach Bolton exclaimed when he entered the workshop. Troy was right behind him, looking very pleased.

“Wow, this is amazing,” Troy commented, checking out the work that was being done. “I’m so impressed.” He walked over to Zeke and gave him a high five. “We are going to have the best booth!”

“You bet,” Zeke agreed. Then he stopped sanding the piece of wood in front of him and leaned in closer to Troy. “How come you didn’t

answer my text from earlier?” he whispered.

Chad looked up. He’d been so wrapped up in building the booth that he’d forgotten to ask Troy about the messages. Now he quietly listened in.

“My phone’s dead, and I forgot to charge it last night,” Troy admitted. “I’ve been so busy with all the details for Wildcat Day that I haven’t had a chance to do anything else. Ever since Gabriella asked me to be on the committee with her, it’s been nonstop Wildcat Day duty!”

Standing up, Chad set down his hammer, and was about to walk over to Troy. But right at that moment, Mr. Lloyd called for help.

“I need some help putting the bench in the booth,” Mr. Lloyd said. He was struggling to hold a large piece of wood. “Can I get a few hands here?”

Chad, Zeke, and Jason raced over and helped to heave the heavy piece onto the mount in the booth. Carefully, they were able to secure the wooden seat.

“Perfect,” Chad said, as he jumped up and sat on the bench. “Who’s the first one going down?”

“My guess is that it’s you!” Jason exclaimed, playfully hitting the bull’s-eye on the side so that Chad fell to the ground.

Bouncing up, Chad laughed. “Very funny,” he said dryly. “At least there’s no water yet.” He stood up and dusted off his pants. “Let’s start sealing the inside so we *can* fill this with some water.”

The team kept working, and Chad lost track of time. When he finally got a chance to look up, he noticed that Troy was gone.

“Where’s Troy?” Chad asked, looking around.

“He took off about five minutes ago,” Zeke said. “He had to go meet Gabriella.”

The phone in Chad’s pocket vibrated again. Chad didn’t want to look. But how could he not? The message was from Taylor.

Do you need me to take care of it?

What did *that* mean? Chad raised his hammer and pounded the final nail into the board.

Tomorrow, he'd have to find Troy and switch phones—and get some answers. He was tired of being left out and wanted to know what was going on. What was everyone being so secretive about?



CHAPTER SIX

Taylor smiled when she walked into the cafeteria on Friday after school. All the new committee members were there for the last Wildcat Day meeting. Tomorrow was the big day, and Taylor didn't want to waste any more time.

“This is turning out fantastically!” Taylor cried, beaming at all the Wildcats sitting in the cafeteria. Gabriella’s idea to involve more people was brilliant. Now the committee had

twenty-five students, and everyone was eager to help out.

“Hey, Taylor,” Martha called, running up to her. She held up a large sign for Taylor to see. SCHOLASTIC DECATHLON TEAM ROCKS! Martha did a quick dance move and showed off the sign for their dance booth.

“Taylor, check out the yearbook’s booth,” Danny Hosten said, getting up from the next table. He showed Taylor a sign that had a drawing of a girl and a boy in a sack race. “We even got Green Hill Farm to donate the potato sacks for the race!”

Kelsi appeared by Taylor’s side, beaming with pride. “Check out the musical beanbag toss for the orchestra booth,” she said. She held up a few beanbags with musical notes painted on them.

“Those are adorable!” Taylor shrieked.

“Thanks,” Kelsi replied with a smile. “The kids will toss them into an upside-down drum. It’s going to be the high note of the day!” She

winked and went back to join the others, who were hard at work painting notes on the other beanbags.

Taylor grinned. “This is so great,” she told her friends. She was glad that so many Wildcats were inspired to come up with new ideas. There was going to be a record number of booths at this year’s event. Everyone was really getting into the spirit of Wildcat Day. Now if only all the logistics of the day would come together! She hoped that Sharpay had gone over all her plans with the committee.

“Wildcat Day is going to be amazing!” Gabriella gushed as Taylor sat down next to her. “All the new committee members have been working on their signs and getting their booths ready. I hope Chad feels better, though. I saw him in the nurse’s office earlier and he looked really sick.”

“Yeah, I saw him, too,” Taylor said. “He told me that he thinks he had some bad sushi for dinner last night.” She paused for a moment,

and then took out the Wildcat Day clipboard from her bag. She checked her long list of things to do. “It was a great idea to expand the committee, Gabriella,” she said. “Thanks for coming up with that!”

Gabriella leaned in closer and whispered in Taylor’s ear. “But where is Sharpay? I thought she was supposed to start the meeting.”

“I have no idea,” Taylor said, looking around. She stood up to get a good view of the cafeteria. “I told her and Ms. Darbus that I had a Chemistry Club meeting before this. We knew Ms. Darbus was going to be coming after her faculty tea, but Sharpay was supposed to start the meeting and assign the committee jobs.”

“I haven’t seen her,” Gabriella said, shaking her head.

Taylor scanned the room. Groups of students were clustered around talking and laughing. While everyone was working on the booths, there was still a lot more organizing to do. Oh, no, thought Taylor. How are we ever going to

pull off this event? Her heart started pounding. There were large banners announcing Wildcat Day hanging from the railing of every staircase. How was the day going to live up to the event's slogan? "Show Your Spirit at the *Best Wildcat Day Ever!*" Taylor took a deep breath. "Sharpay promised to be here early to handle the assignments. If we don't follow a schedule, we're going to have complete chaos! I knew I shouldn't have trusted her."

"Ryan!" Sharpay's voice rang out. "Be careful!"

Taylor and Gabriella saw Ryan slowly walking down the cafeteria steps, trying to balance a large box. Sharpay was in front of him, swinging a shiny red handbag. "Don't trip!" she called over her shoulder.

"A little help?" Ryan muttered from behind the box. "This is heavy, Sharpay!"

Gliding down the steps, Sharpay entered the cafeteria as if she were making an entrance onto a Broadway stage. Wearing a red skirt and a

white-and-red-striped tank top, she made her way down the steps to the tables. “Thank you all for coming!” she called out.

“As if this were some big party, just to celebrate her,” Taylor huffed. “She has barely done anything to help plan this event.” Taylor glared at Sharpay. “And I guarantee, she’s going to take all the credit.”

“Hello, committee,” Sharpay said as she walked up to Taylor and Gabriella.

“Where have you been?” Taylor asked snippily.

Pursing her lips and narrowing her eyes, Sharpay gave Taylor a cold stare. How dare Taylor talk to her like that! Sharpay was silently fuming. She’d been shopping for the materials they’d need for the tiara and puppet booths. It was important that she personally select the right materials for the projects.

“Sharpay, this meeting was supposed to start an hour ago,” Taylor scolded. “I told you that I was going to come late, and you said that you’d handle giving out the assignments.” Flipping

through the papers on her clipboard, Taylor found the list of schedules that she had planned out for every volunteer. “Do you even have the copy that I e-mailed to you?” She folded her arms across her chest.

Gabriella got up and stood next to Taylor. She could see that her friend was seething. “Stay calm,” she whispered into Taylor’s ear.

Sharpay’s eyes narrowed. She didn’t like the tone that Taylor was using. “Of course,” Sharpay snapped. She took Taylor’s e-mail out of her bag and showed it to everyone to prove she had it. “But what makes you think you are the boss here?”

Ryan put the box he was carrying on the table. He put a hand on Sharpay’s shoulder. “Easy, Sharpay,” he said nervously.

Luckily, Gabriella spotted Ms. Darbus coming down the steps. She was more than relieved to see her English teacher and hoped that Ms. Darbus could calm Sharpay and Taylor down.

“What’s going on?” Ms. Darbus asked as she

approached the girls. She pushed her glasses up on her nose and looked back and forth between Taylor and Sharpay.

Suddenly, both girls started talking at the same time. It was impossible to understand what either one of them was saying.

“All right, then,” Ms. Darbus said, holding her ears. “One at a time, please.”

Again, they started talking at once. Ms. Darbus held up her hands, and both girls stopped speaking. “You first,” she said, turning to Taylor. “But quietly and calmly, please.”

“I’ve done all the scheduling and arranging!” Taylor cried. She pointed a finger toward Sharpay. “And she’s done *nothing*!”

“Wait a minute,” Sharpay said, stepping closer to Taylor. “I’ve been *all* about Wildcat Day. I got all these extra people here, and I’ve been talking up this event and shopping all week.”

“Shopping?” Taylor squealed. “For *what*? A perfect outfit that you can wear during your showstopping number?” she spat out.

“No,” Sharpay said, glaring at Taylor. She tossed her blond hair impatiently. “This is *ridiculous*. I don’t have to report to you.” She turned on the heel of her red strappy sandal and folded her hands across her chest.

“You know what? I’ve had enough!” Taylor exclaimed. “Sharpay, you deal with the scheduling and all the details! I can’t take it anymore.”

Ms. Darbus looked over at Taylor. “Taylor, wait,” she pleaded. “Please calm down. We can all work this out.”

But Taylor wasn’t willing to wait. She took her clipboard full of Wildcat Day papers and handed it to Gabriella. “Here,” she said, and then she stormed out of the cafeteria.

At the cafeteria door, Troy was walking in just as Taylor was racing out. He quickly jumped out of the way as she charged past him.

“Whoa,” Troy said. He spotted Ryan and went over to ask him what was going on. “What was *that* all about? Taylor almost knocked me over!”

“There’s been just a *little* bit of drama here,”

Ryan said sarcastically. He adjusted the blue cap on his head. “And I don’t mean the happy song-and-dance kind.”

“I was just coming by to pick up Gabriella,” Troy explained. “But Taylor would have tackled me if I hadn’t moved out of the way.”

“If she’s bailing, then so am I!” Sharpay cried as she charged toward Troy. She handed him her clipboard. “Here you go. I’m sure that you and Gabriella can run Wildcat Day just fine.”

Troy’s mouth opened wide. “Wh-Wh-What?” He glanced down at the clipboard in his hands. “What’s going on here?”

Ryan shrugged. “Now that’s some serious drama.”

Gabriella looked over at Troy. “What are we going to do?”

“We’ve got to get those two back together,” Troy told her as he watched Sharpay make her exit out of the cafeteria.

“I suggest you start that plan right away,” Ms. Darbus said, shaking her head. She stood

between Gabriella and Troy and put her arms around their shoulders. “The show must go on, you know.”

“That’s not going to be easy,” Ryan pointed out. “They are both pretty fired up. And they both can be pretty stubborn.”

Gabriella knew that she had to do something. Suddenly, the cafeteria was silent. Everyone on the committee had stopped to watch the argument between Sharpay and Taylor.

Gabriella stood up on a chair and addressed the crowd. “Wildcats, we need your help. Our chairpersons, um, they had to . . .” She was at a loss for words and turned to Troy.

Troy leaped up on another chair and gave Gabriella an encouraging smile. “They had to run, but they gave us a list to read. So listen up for your committee assignments for tomorrow.”

“Please listen for your name and your position,” Gabriella went on, gaining more confidence as she spoke. Everyone waited in anticipation. No one was ready to give up on the

idea of having the biggest and best Wildcat Day ever.

Now all Gabriella and Troy had to do was figure out how to get Sharpay and Taylor to remember that, as well. And they needed to figure it out fast!

CHAPTER SEVEN

Troy reached into a brown paper bag and pulled out a glazed doughnut. He took a big bite and looked over at Gabriella, who was sitting next to him in the front seat of his truck.

“How can you eat at a time like this?” Gabriella asked as she watched Troy devour his third doughnut of the morning. She was so nervous that her stomach was in knots, making the thought of eating unbearable.

“Oh, come on,” Troy said. “The plan has to work.” He winked at Gabriella. “Taylor and Sharpay are both going to show. Trust me.”

Gabriella wished that she was as confident as Troy. But she couldn’t be, even though their plan was pretty simple. Last night, Troy had called Sharpay and told her that Taylor wanted to apologize. Then Gabriella had called Taylor and told her that Sharpay wanted to apologize. Both girls had believed the stories, and they were due to arrive at the school parking lot in five minutes. Because it was so early in the morning, there would hopefully be enough time for them to talk and get things organized before everyone arrived at the field for Wildcat Day.

The plan was risky, Gabriella knew. She wasn’t sure what would happen, but Troy had persuaded her to at least try it out. Without Taylor and Sharpay, Wildcat Day would definitely not be as much fun.

“I really hope you’re right,” Gabriella told Troy. She was staring straight ahead at the

entrance gate, hoping to see a car drive through.

“Yummmm, these are so good,” Troy said, focusing on the doughnut in his hand. Extending his arm out to Gabriella, he waved the pastry near her nose. “Really, take a bite. Dolly’s Doughnuts are the best—especially when you get them hot.”

Gabriella shook her head. But a smile spread across her face as she started to giggle at Troy. He had powdered sugar all over his face!

“What?” he asked. Gabriella’s pointed to his face, and Troy sat up straight and peered into the rearview mirror. Quickly he wiped off the white coating of sugar, laughing.

“Look!” Gabriella exclaimed. She pointed at the front gate of the school. Two cars were pulling in. Sharpay’s pink convertible was hard to miss. And right behind her car was Taylor’s jeep. “Whew,” Gabriella sighed. “But now comes the hard part.” She looked over at Troy. “You ready?”

“You bet!” Troy exclaimed, brushing the rest

of the powdered sugar and the stray crumbs off his face and shirt. “Game on!”

Sharpay and Taylor parked their cars and walked over to Troy and Gabriella. The four of them were standing in front of Troy’s truck. There was absolute silence . . . until Gabriella started to speak.

“So, here we all are,” Gabriella said, a bit too enthusiastically. She looked at the faces in front of her. “Are we ready to get started?”

Taylor eyed Sharpay. She wasn’t sure that Sharpay had any intention of apologizing, but she was standing there. “I will if she will,” Taylor finally said, looking straight at Sharpay.

Tilting her head to one side, Sharpay nodded. Her arms were folded over her chest. “Fine,” she said.

“Great!” Troy cheered, clapping his hands. “So let’s get started! Wildcat Day is about to begin!” He wanted to get them moving so they wouldn’t have time to realize that no one had actually apologized.

Troy and Gabriella gave the co-chairpersons back their clipboards, and the group spun into action. Sharpay was on her cell phone barking orders as Taylor walked over to the field with Gabriella and Troy to make sure the booths were set up correctly.

“Hey, Troy,” Taylor said as she walked. “How come you didn’t answer my text last night?”

Troy shook his head. “I still haven’t found my new charger!” he told her. “I know that’s so lame. Chad and I both got these really cool phones, and I haven’t been using mine.”

“Speaking of Chad,” Gabriella said, “have you spoken to him? He went home sick yesterday.” She stopped walking and faced Troy.

“I haven’t,” Troy said, pausing to consider the question. “I’ve been totally crazy with this Wildcat Day.” He gave Gabriella a playful shove. “Someone signed me up for lots of work!”

“I talked to him this morning,” Taylor said. “He feels much better. It must have been just a twenty-four hour bug or something. He said he

would meet us early to help out. He loves Wildcat Day.”

“Yeah,” Troy agreed. “Ever since we were kids, this was always his favorite day.”

Soon the parking lot started to fill with seniors ready to start working. A group of parents who were part of the Red and White Club set up a booth of drinks and snacks for everyone. Coach Bolton and Ms. Darbus watched proudly as the committee hustled to set up the field. The whole community was working together.

In the parking lot, Sharpay was handing out red T-shirts with a big Wildcat logo to all of the seniors.

“These are awesome!” Jason exclaimed when Sharpay handed him one.

“Great idea, Sharpay,” Martha said as she slipped the shirt over her head.

“Perfect!” Kelsi cried when she saw the logo on the front of the shirt.

Sharpay grinned. She loved the idea of all the seniors wearing Wildcat shirts. Of course, hers

was studded with red and white rhinestones. A little sparkle never hurt!

The setup was going well, but Taylor couldn't help gazing at a large black cloud hovering in the sky. She kept looking up at the dark patch, wondering what to make of the situation.

"Do you think it's going to rain?" she asked Gabriella as they walked around the field together. Everyone was busy setting up their booths, and everything was moving along on schedule. But Taylor was worried. She forgot to check the weather for that day. Was Wildcat Day going to be a wash-out?

Gabriella looked up toward the storm cloud. She had seen it earlier and hadn't said anything. Everyone was so enthusiastic about setting up outside. She doubted that anyone wanted to move the event inside to the gym.

"Stop looking so worried," Sharpay said to Taylor and Gabriella. She appeared behind the girls. "Rain is forecasted for later. We're going to be fine. Besides"—she winked—"I had Wildcat

umbrellas printed up along with the T-shirts, so we'll be prepared."

Taylor looked at Sharpay in amazement. "You really did do a lot of work on this event, didn't you?"

Sharpay smiled. "About as much as you did," she said proudly. "Just differently."

"You know," Gabriella said, looking between the two chairpersons, "I think Principal Matsui knew exactly what he was doing when he picked the two of you to be co-chairs. You both brought different skills, and look what happened." She stopped and gestured to the decorated field. "It's going to be the best Wildcat Day ever!"

Sharpay and Taylor smiled. The field did look pretty good, with the streamers, the balloons, the booths with games, and all the seniors in their red Wildcat shirts.

"Good job," Taylor said to Sharpay.

"You, too," Sharpay said.

"Now let's hope that the rain cloud blows over," Gabriella remarked, looking up at the sky.

“Oh, it won’t rain,” Sharpay and Taylor said at the same time. And then they both smiled.

Gabriella grinned. Troy’s plan had worked! Taylor and Sharpay were really showing everyone what a great team they could be. And now Gabriella really couldn’t wait to experience her first Wildcat Day!

CHAPTER EIGHT

Two hours later, Sharpay tapped her foot impatiently. All her plans had been set in motion. She was ready for the show to start. But there couldn't be a show until the audience arrived.

“Where is everyone?” Sharpay whined to herself. “I can’t believe that no one is here.” She spun around to look at the empty field again. “It’s showtime!” Even though all of the plans

were in order, Sharpay was really nervous. She wanted this year's Wildcat Day to be the best one yet!

Ryan gazed at his sister from the lawn chair that he had set up in the Drama Club's pie-throwing booth. Since he was going to have pies thrown at him, he thought he should at least be comfortable! He was enjoying the quiet moments before the day's festivities began. He was pretty sure that in a few hours he would be completely covered in pie!

“Don’t worry,” Ryan said as he sipped a cup of hot chocolate. He adjusted the red-and-white-checkered hat on his head and sighed, leaning back into his chair. “The people will come.”

“But they aren’t here now!” Sharpay complained. She planted her hands firmly on her hips. “How can you just sit there?”

Ryan lifted his cap. “Didn’t you demand that I sit here all day and have pies thrown at me?” he replied. He shrugged innocently. “I’m just following orders.”

“Ryyyyyaaaaan!” Sharpay cried. Exasperated by her brother’s reaction, Sharpay went in search of someone else to listen to her.

She charged over to the basketball booth, where Mr. Lloyd was standing with Coach Bolton. They were both admiring the work of the team.

“The boys did a great job,” Mr. Lloyd said. “Especially Chad. He was feeling better in the afternoon, so he came back to school late last night and helped put the finishing touches on the booth.” The basketball team truly had done remarkable work. The booth looked amazing!

“Chad has given one hundred and ten percent to Wildcat Day,” the coach said proudly.

“He’s certainly got the spirit,” Mr. Lloyd said, grinning. He gave Coach Bolton a knowing look.

“Hey, Sharpay,” Coach Bolton said when he saw her. “Doesn’t this new booth look great?”

Sharpay had been so focused on the vacant parking lot that she hadn’t noticed the large new booth before her.

Zeke spotted Sharpay and rushed over to her. “Hey, there,” he said, looking concerned. Sharpay seemed totally stressed out. “What’s wrong?”

“Where is everyone?” she blurted.

“People are going to come,” Zeke assured her. “There isn’t a lamppost or telephone pole in town that doesn’t have a Wildcat Day flyer on it.” He smiled at her. “You did a great job as chair. You and Taylor both.”

But Sharpay wasn’t really listening. She was staring at the parking lot instead.

Zeke tried to get Sharpay to look his way. “Did you see all the boxes of lemon meringue pies that I dropped off at your booth?” Leaning in closer to her, he whispered, “I also made a special one that I put in a red box and set aside. You know, if you want to eat one, not just throw one!”

The sweet gesture didn’t go unnoticed by Sharpay. “Thanks, Zeke,” she said. But still her eyes never left the parking lot.

Coach Bolton noticed Sharpay’s worried expression. He checked his wristwatch. “It’s just

about ten o'clock," he told her. "Don't worry, Sharpay. Nothing is going to keep this town away from Wildcat Day. Rain or shine, this is a big day."

Just at that moment, Sharpay saw two cars pull into the lot. And just as those pulled in, three more cars made the turn into the gate.

"People are coming!" Sharpay exclaimed. She jumped up and down. "I have to get ready for my entrance!"

Coach Bolton shook his head, laughing. "Break a leg, Sharpay!"

"I'm right behind you," Zeke called, running after Sharpay.

As Sharpay and Zeke raced across the field, Troy and Gabriella did a double take.

"I haven't seen Sharpay move that fast since her big costume change in last year's musical," Troy said with a laugh.

"And I'm sure she's never run that fast out here on the field the whole time she's been at East High," Gabriella added.

Troy laughed and grabbed Gabriella's hand as they walked around the field. "What do you think of your first Wildcat Day?" he asked.

"It's awesome," Gabriella said. "It's so nice to see everyone working together. The kids are going to have a blast."

"There's going to be a great turnout," Troy told her as he looked around the field.

Gabriella smiled. "Taylor and Sharpay turned out to be quite a team," she said. "They just needed a little help." She winked at Troy. "They both did so much, and now their work is paying off. Look at all the people coming in," she said, pointing toward the entrance gates.

There was a line of cars waiting to park. Wildcat Day was definitely going to be a highlight for East High—and the senior class. Gabriella was thrilled to be a part of it.

"I'm sure that this is going to raise lots of money for the school," Gabriella said happily.

"Gabriella! Troy! Have you two seen Chad?" Taylor asked worriedly, rushing up to her friends.

Both Gabriella and Troy shook their heads. “I can’t believe he’s not here yet,” Taylor said, scanning the crowd for Chad’s trademark curly hair. “He loves Wildcat Day! And he promised to help me!”

Troy and Gabriella looked at one another. It wasn’t like Chad to be late, especially for something he loved so much.

Gabriella noticed that Taylor was getting really anxious. “Troy, maybe you should call him,” she suggested.

Troy pushed his hair off his forehead. “I don’t have my phone,” he said, sighing. “I can’t find my charger. The phone has been dead for the last couple of days.”

“You can use mine,” Gabriella offered. She dug into her bag and handed Troy her phone. “But we are going to find that charger tonight!”

Troy took Gabriella’s phone and called Chad. The call went right to voicemail. Troy began to leave a message. “Hey, Chad, where are you? We’re here at Wildcat Day. See you soon.” He

gave the phone back to Gabriella. “I hope he gets here,” he said. “We’ve got to start the show!”

Taylor giggled. “Troy, you sound like Sharpay! Now you’re calling Wildcat Day a show, too?”

Giving her a playful tap on the shoulder, Troy laughed. “Yeah, right,” he joked. “No singing and dancing from me today!”

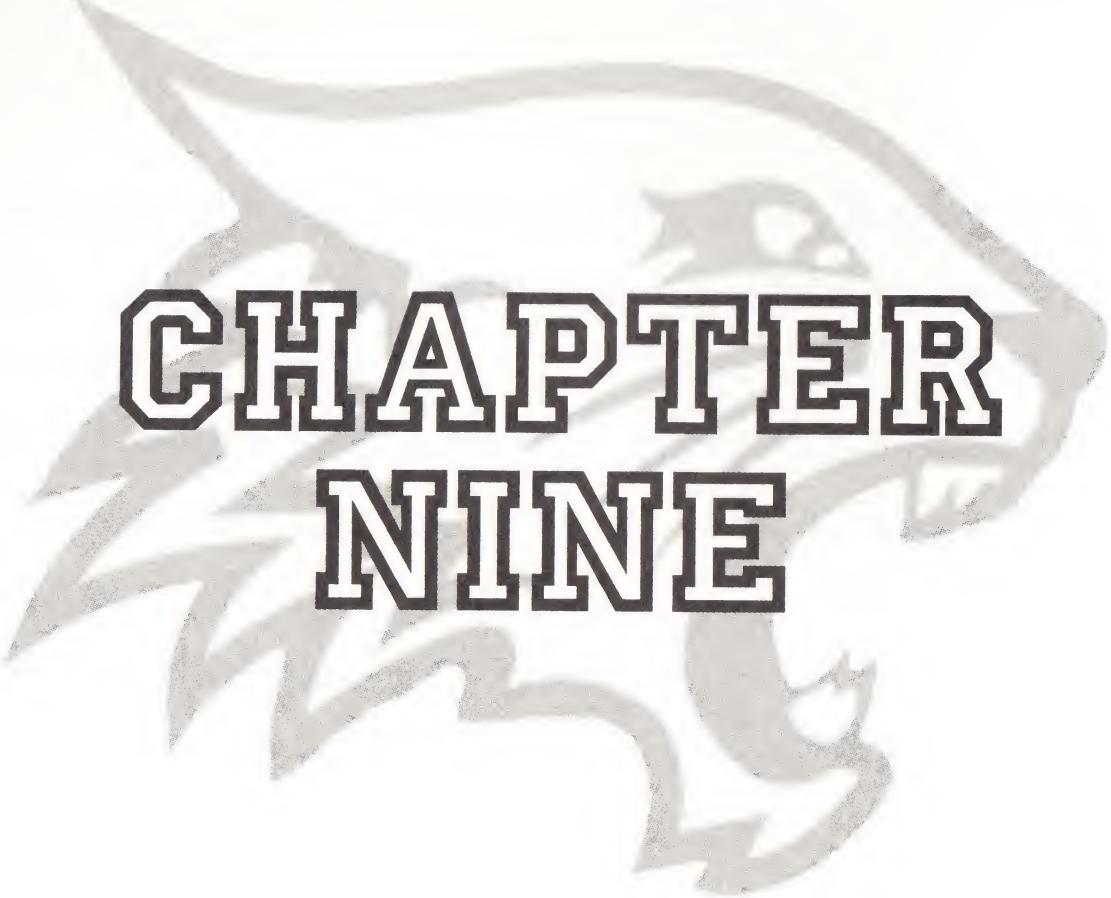
“Not even if Sharpay begs?” Gabriella teased him.

“Especially if Sharpay starts begging,” Troy said. “No way.”

“We should have made Gabriella talk you into singing,” Taylor said. “I’m sure Kelsi would have loved to write another song for you two.”

As they continued joking around, Gabriella started to get a little worried, too. She hadn’t spoken to Chad in a couple of days, and Taylor had hinted that he wasn’t returning her calls. Was he really sick yesterday, or was there something else going on? And since when did Troy not know where his best friend was? They were always together. Gabriella glanced over

at the basketball booth, where all the players were standing. I'm sure he's on his way, she thought. He just has to be. Besides he doesn't have any reason to be mad at any of us. Does he?



CHAPTER NINE

A row of red and white balloons tied to the fence in the school parking-lot blew in the wind as Chad drove into the student lot. The dark clouds that were hovering above were starting to move to the east, and the sun was breaking through. As Chad got out of his car, he noticed that there were already quite a few people walking around on the field. Wildcat Day had officially begun.

Walking toward the field entrance, Chad

looked down at Troy's cell phone in his hand. He had to find Troy right away. He was tired of seeing all the messages from his friends about him. Even Taylor seemed to be in on something, and not knowing what his friends were up to made him very uneasy. He was feeling as if he had just been benched during a big game. And he did not like his seat on the sidelines one bit.

"Hey, Chad!" Sharpay called to him. Waving her arms in the air, she motioned him over. She handed him a red Wildcat T-shirt. "Here's your senior shirt."

"Thanks, Sharpay," he said, slipping the shirt over his head. He shook his curls back into place and looked around the field.

"The slam-dunk booth looks great!" Sharpay exclaimed, but she noticed that Chad was not paying attention. She shrugged and turned to welcome other seniors coming onto the field.

Chad walked away from Sharpay distractedly. He felt bad for not responding to her praise

about the booth, but he was focused on something else. He was on the lookout for Troy.

As he walked around, Chad noticed that there were more booths set up than in any of the previous years. Sharpay and Taylor had done a great job themselves and had also really rallied the students of East High to participate in the event. Everyone from the Chess Club to the Chemistry Club was represented. And everyone seemed to be having a great time. He really wished he could.

“Hey, Chad!” Taylor called out. She raced up to him. Clutching her clipboard in her arms and with a pencil tucked behind her ear, she looked very official. “I’m so glad you’re here!” she exclaimed. Then she stood back and studied his face. “But you’re late. Everyone is asking about you! Is everything ok?”

Chad was about to ask Taylor if she knew if anything was going on, but he didn’t have a chance to.

“Taylor! Oh, Taylor!” Ms. Darbus sang out as

she came walking toward them. “We need your help over at the ticket booth.” She smiled at Chad and then took Taylor’s hand.

“I’ll catch up with you later!” Taylor called over her shoulder as Ms. Darbus dragged her off.

“Yeah, sure,” Chad mumbled. Even Taylor was too busy to talk to him, he thought. He sighed and walked over to the dunk tank. Sharpay’s praise was nice, but seeing the booth in action was the real prize. Jason was perched up on the seat above the water while a little boy in an East High T-shirt tried his best to throw a basketball through the hoop. If it went in, the ball would drop on a piece of wood that released the seat, and the player would be dunked. At the moment, Jason hadn’t been in the water. But from the look of the tall kid up next, Jason wasn’t going to be dry for long.

“Hey, Danforth!” Jason yelled from his perch. He waved his hands and swung his feet. “Nice digs, huh?”

“Looking good!” Chad shouted, trying to act

normal. He raised his hand and offered a thumbs-up of approval to Jason.

“You know,” Jason yelled, “you’re the one in the booth!” He patted the seat with his hand. “I was just covering for you until you showed up.”

Just then, the tall boy stepped up for his turn. He shot the ball perfectly into the hoop, the seat fell down, and Jason went into the water with a splash. A loud cheer erupted from the line, and the boy who had shot the ball beamed with pride.

“Great shot,” Chad said to the boy. He went over to him and gave him a pat on the back. “You’ll make the varsity basketball team one day, I’m sure,” he told him.

“Your turn!” Jason shouted to Chad as he climbed out of the water. He grabbed one of the towels stacked on a chair to dry himself off with.

Knowing he had to stick to the schedule the coach had made for the team, Chad got ready to take his turn. He’d have to wait to talk to Troy—again!

“Good luck to you,” Jason said with a

grin as Chad walked past him.

“Great,” Chad said as he dropped his backpack by the side of the booth. He took his money, keys, and Troy’s phone and slipped them into the bag.

“Has anyone seen Troy?” he asked, looking around.

“He’s definitely around here,” one of the Wildcats’ players said. “He was here really early.”

Sliding onto the bench, Chad tried to get comfortable. There was a good view of the field, so he scanned the crowd for Troy. Lots of people were pointing to the booth and admiring the design. Chad was glad that it had turned out so well. It had been a lot of work building the new one, but already he could tell that the basketball booth was the most popular. The line was growing longer by the minute!

Once he was seated on the bench, he gave the signal to Zeke, who tossed the basketball to the next person in line. She was a small girl with red hair in pigtails. Chad breathed a sigh of

relief. There was no way a little girl like that could sink the shot!

“Whoa!” Chad cried as the seat gave way, and he slid down to the water.

SPLASH!

He jumped up and shook his head, spraying water everywhere. “Nice shot!” he called to the little girl.

The girl blushed and then hit high fives with all the Wildcats who were watching. Zeke grabbed a Wildcats baseball cap and handed it to her.

“Nice move!” he told her. “You’ve got basketball in your future!”

Chad climbed out of the water and grabbed a towel. He pushed his dripping hair away from his face.

“Didn’t expect that one, huh?” Zeke asked with a grin.

“Nope,” Chad replied, wiping himself off. He climbed back to his perch. This is just perfect, Chad thought. I’m only here five minutes and I’m already soaked!

As he sat down, Chad noticed Troy and Gabriella walking by. Great, he said to himself, sighing. He had finally spotted Troy, and again, he couldn't talk to him!

Taylor smiled as she looked across the field at everyone having a good time. There were a ton of kids participating in Wildcat Day, and the sea of red Wildcat T-shirts proved that the seniors had shown up to help out.

“We pulled it off, huh?” Taylor commented to Sharpay as she walked over to her. Sharpay was standing in front of the karaoke booth, listening to Charlotte Richards, one of the seniors, sing. There were several people clapping along to the music and dancing.

“We certainly did,” Sharpay said, smiling.

“You know,” Taylor said, “I have to admit that your idea to have a karaoke booth was brilliant. And the line at the make-your-own tiara booth is huge!” Taylor smiled. “You had some great ideas, Sharpay. You really came through.”

Sharpay smiled. "Thanks," she said. She adjusted her sunglasses and then gazed around at the crowded field. "We actually made a pretty good team," she said.

"When we weren't arguing," Taylor added.

Ms. Darbus came rushing up to her two co-chairs and put her arms around them. "This is a fabulous turn out for a Wildcat Day!" she exclaimed. "I just spoke to Coach Bolton, and I think we're going to make more money for the school than ever before. You both did a *stupendous* job!"

Sharpay and Taylor smiled. "Thanks," they said in unison.

"Now it's time for the show to start," Ms. Darbus said. "Are you both ready?"

"You know I never miss an entrance," Sharpay reminded her.

"I'm there," Taylor said as they all walked toward the stage. This was the big moment for Wildcat Day, and no one wanted to miss it!

CHAPTER TEN

“Hello, Wildcats!” Coach Bolton announced into the microphone. He stood in the middle of the stage, looking out into the cheering crowd. “Welcome to Wildcat Day!”

The crowd had settled down in front of the stage area. Never before had there been a stage at Wildcat Day, but even Coach Bolton had to admit that it was nice to have the space to officially welcome everyone.

“I’d like to thank the Wildcat Parents Association for all their support,” he said. “And a big thanks to all the parents in the Red and White Club who showed up here early to help make sure that everything was set up.”

The crowd cheered again.

Coach Bolton held up his hands for quiet before he continued. “Let’s hear it for Ms. Darbus and for the amazing co-chairs, Sharpay Evans and Taylor McKessie, for all their hard work! And for the rest of the seniors who pitched in, too. This is truly the best Wildcat Day ever!”

Sharpay and Taylor walked onstage and stood next to Coach Bolton, enjoying the moment of praise. They both took bows and waved at the audience. Coach Bolton handed the microphone to Sharpay.

Sharpay smiled at the crowd. This was her moment, and she wasn’t going to rush through it.

“Welcome to Wildcat Day!” she shouted.

The crowd roared their response with a loud cheer.

“We hope that everyone is having a good time,” she continued. “This day is all about East High, and having true school spirit.” Sharpay handed the microphone to Taylor.

“Please join us in welcoming the co-captain of the varsity basketball team, Troy Bolton, to the stage!” Taylor cheered. She slipped the microphone back into the stand and clapped her hands.

Gabriella raised her eyebrows at Troy, who was standing next to her. “Wait, are you going to sing?” she asked.

“Not without you,” Troy said with a wink as he jogged up to the stage. “But I am going to make an announcement!” he called over his shoulder. He leaped up the steps and stood between Sharpay and Taylor. Troy took the microphone off the stand and turned to the crowd.

“This year we decided to do something different on Wildcat Day,” he explained.

Off to the side, Chad had just finished his turn sitting in the dunking booth and was watching

the scene onstage. He had no idea what Troy was doing up there with Sharpay and Taylor. He felt more out of the loop than ever.

“This is the first year that we will award a senior with the Most Valuable Wildcat Player award,” Troy went on. “This is a Wildcat who has shown tremendous team and school spirit.”

Gabriella smiled. Troy was really at home onstage in front of an audience. He was a total natural, center court or center stage.

“The award is given to the Wildcat who has displayed dedication and enthusiasm for the school and participates in a team sport,” Troy told the audience. “This year the award goes to Chad Danforth! My good friend and co-captain!”

The crowd clapped and started to chant Chad’s name. Chad was stunned. His mouth dropped open, and he stood frozen.

“Go up there, man!” Jason urged.

“Get your award!” Zeke added. “The crowd is cheering for you!”

Chad was definitely surprised. Was this what all the secrecy was about? He suddenly felt really relieved. He wasn't being left out of anything! He leaped onto the stage and gave Troy a high five. "Thanks, man," he said.

Taylor handed Chad a trophy that had his name engraved on a brass plate. "Congratulations, Wildcat," she said, grinning. "Are you surprised?"

"You bet," Chad said, smiling.

Sharpay took the microphone and motioned to Kelsi to start playing the piano. Of course Sharpay had prepared a song-and-dance routine! Once the music started, she began to belt out her song.

Gabriella had to hand it to Sharpay, she really could pull off performing anywhere. And the crowd was loving it! Everyone was clapping along to the music.

When Ryan and Martha ran onstage to join her, the audience screamed and cheered even louder. Ryan and Martha's dance steps

were completely in sync with one another's.

As Chad, Taylor, and Troy stood off to the side, Chad leaned over to Troy. He handed Troy his cell phone and informed him of the mix-up.

“I’m sorry,” Chad said. “This week has been so busy that I never got to tell you about the switch.” He shook his head and then looked down at his feet. “I didn’t know what was going on.”

A smile spread across Troy’s face. Suddenly he understood what had happened. All those text messages that everyone was sending had gotten Chad all confused—and hurt his feelings. “Hey, did you at least charge my phone for me?” Troy asked jokingly.

Chad laughed. “Yeah, it’s charged and ready for service!”

“I was kind of avoiding you,” Troy confessed to Chad. “I didn’t want to be the one to leak the big surprise. When my dad told me that the award was going to you, I thought that you were

the perfect choice. But I was afraid I would slip and tell you!"

"And everyone was just really happy for you!" Taylor added. "Everyone was texting because they wanted you to be surprised! I'm so sorry that you felt left out."

Suddenly, Chad was feeling like the happiest Wildcat ever!

Kelsi played the last chord of Sharpay's song, and the audience applauded. Chad pumped his fist in the air and ran to the center of the stage.

"What's our name?" he yelled.

"Wildcats," the crowd responded.

"What's our name?" he yelled again.

"WILDCATS!" the crowd cheered again, this time even louder.

"Hey, seniors!" Chad called. "Everyone stand up!" He waved his arms, signaling his classmates to join them onstage. Wildcat Day was about seniors giving back to the school and the community. Chad wanted them all to share in the moment together.

All the seniors, wearing their red Wildcat shirts, charged the stage. Ryan, Martha, and Sharpay did one of their choreographed dances while Taylor, Chad, Zeke, and Jason tried to follow along. Troy grabbed Gabriella's hand and together they led a Wildcat cheer.

The crowd was dancing and cheering—and everyone was joining in on the fun.

Taylor caught Sharpay's eye, and they both grinned. They had pulled it off! Even with their different approaches, they were able to come together and create a perfect day.

Chad ran over to Troy. "Number one!" he shouted.

Troy laughed and hit a high five with his best friend. "You know it!" he cheered.

This was the best Wildcat Day Chad had ever experienced. He should never have doubted his friends. Three cheers for the Wildcats!



LET THE GAMES BEGIN!

It's time for Wildcat Day at East High! It's going to be an action-packed event filled with egg tosses, sack races, and tons of other fun games. Plus, Troy is planning a top secret surprise for Chad. But a cell-phone mix-up causes Chad to wonder what everyone is being so secretive about and why he's being left out of the loop. Will Chad find out what the big mystery is before the Wildcats take the field?

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0609 \$ 6.31

RM11.90 / S\$5.90 GST not incl.

ISBN: 978-967-320-330-7



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